

The Ultimate Affiliate Marketing Guide



LiveChat

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Introduction



In this guide, you'll find the complete information about how to start your journey as an affiliate marketer. Find out what exactly you'll have to do to become a professional and succeed in this industry.

Affiliate marketing is an online marketing technique in which merchants pay commission to publishers, who efficiently promote their products and services. It became one of the most popular ways of making money online for a reason: **it works!**

While many businesses have high barriers of entry, both in terms of financial resources and an in-depth knowledge necessary to start, affiliate marketing stands out in a crowd as a simple and cost-effective way of making money online.

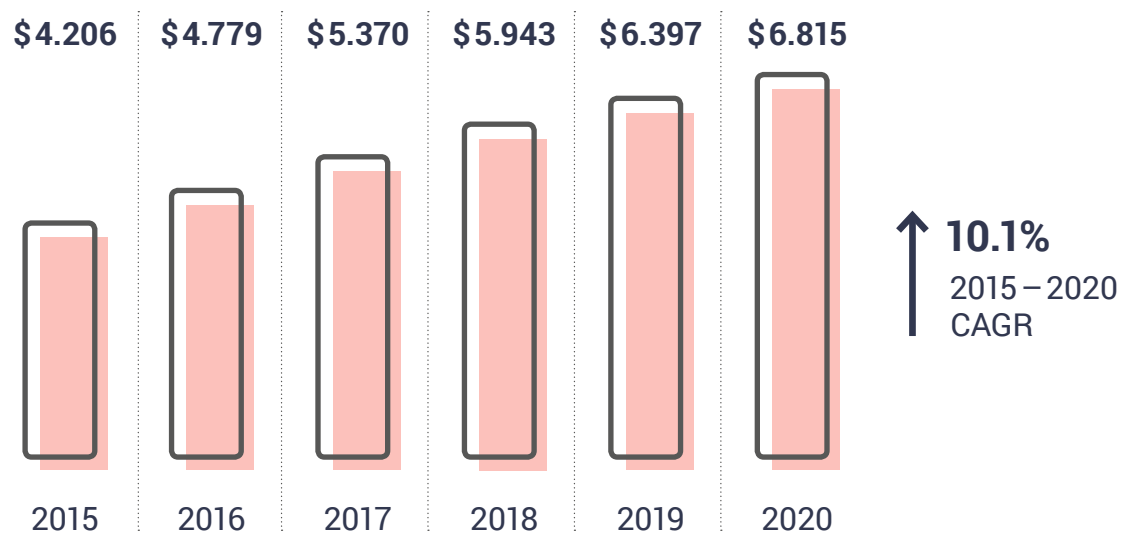
According to a study carried out by Forrester Consulting, affiliate marketing is emerging as a key tool to engage consumers with compelling products. This is happening due to heightened user expectations for compelling and relevant content.

A whopping 84% of publishers are turning to affiliate marketing to get new opportunities for driving revenue to their sites and differentiated content.

Spending in the US alone for affiliate marketing reached 4.8 billion dollars in 2016 – outperforming the Belize economy

twice over – and affiliate marketing has been predicted to reach nearly seven billion by 2020.

Total affiliate marketing spend (Billions)



Source:

A **commissioned study** conducted by *Forrester Consulting* on behalf of *Rakuten Affiliate Network*, January 2016

These facts validate that affiliate marketing is in good health and continuously evolving.

Now, when you already know that affiliate marketing is worth your attention, let's point out pros and cons of this business model.

I

The Complete List of Pros and Cons of Affiliate Marketing



Affiliate marketing can be the easiest online business model to start earning online passive income. It's low-cost, high-profit industry. But, it also might happen to be a tough one. The performance relies on your determination, approach and the affiliate strategy you choose to follow. The whole game is about earning a commission.

Like everything, affiliate marketing involves both advantages and disadvantages. Explore this list to have a smooth start.

The Advantages of Affiliate Marketing

1. Billion-dollar Business

Affiliate marketing is a billion-dollar industry that is lately prospering pretty well, and this seems to be the primary advantage of it. It's a big incentive to get your share, isn't it?

2. Low-Cost Business Idea

Affiliate marketing is an easy industry to join because there are no barriers to entry. It's just the matter of your decision. Once you've got a good idea, nothing can stop you.

3. No Expertise Needed (Practice Makes Perfect)

You don't need to be a marketing expert to become an affiliate. The good thing about affiliate marketing is that you can learn along the way.

4. Low Investment Costs

The operating expenses of the affiliate business are almost non-existent, comparing to other industries. Of course, there are some expenses related to setting up a domain, web hosting operator and also some minor costs of designing a layout, etc. Also, you can think of renting a desk at a co-working space over time. But you are a freelancer, so there are no costs for hiring staff, customer service or inventory costs involved.

5. Extra Source of Income

Starting up as an affiliate marketer doesn't require you to leave your current job. You can do it as a side project and see what you can squeeze out of it over the few first months.

6. Convenience and Flexibility

You don't need to stick to one affiliate marketing program. Select a few products from a given niche and promote them on a daily basis. This way you'll have your portfolio diversified. If one product proves to be

difficult to sell, the other one might be more profitable and act as a solid backup. After all, no one tells you to stay on a sinking ship; if a single program doesn't work for you, just drop it.

7. Customer Service is out of Your Interest

Retaining customers and managing customer service related issues gets problematic at times. As an affiliate, you don't need to bother about that. All you care about is your commission. Anytime you get a post-sale query, you pass such requests onto the merchant's customer service team and wash your hands clean of the entire matter.

8. The Independence

Another benefit of affiliate marketing is the flexibility of working wherever and whenever you want. No matter if you are in the Bahamas or a picturesque Italian village – you decide where your office is located. You can work everywhere as long as you have the Internet connection.

9. Marketing Kit at Right Your Disposal

All marketing materials are provided by vendors, so you don't need to produce banners or promotional materials. You are all set.

10. **Passive Income – Earn Money While You Sleep**

The other strong pro feature of becoming an affiliate marketer is the idea of earning passive income. Wouldn't it be great to wake up in the morning, open your laptop and discover extra revenue in your account?

FURTHER READING:

[Passive Income: How to Make Money While You Sleep](#)

11. **The Sky's NO Limit**

There are many ways to market your affiliate programs. You can **set up an affiliate blog** and post about a chosen niche, **build up your email lists and come up with affiliate emails, create PPC campaigns, use social media** and platforms like *Quora* to market your affiliate products, **mix your organic and paid marketing activities** into cross-channel campaigns if this suits you best. You'll read more about it in the next chapter.

12. **Flexible Working Schedule**

A home business means you are making your framework and daily working schedule. So if anything unexpected comes up like, you can always make time for it.

13. Performance Based Income

This can be perceived either as a benefit or a disadvantage. Affiliate marketing will verify if you are a skilled marketer and at what campaigns specifically. This will be tested over time. After all, success comes to those who work hard and are persistent.

The Disadvantages of Affiliate Marketing

1. You Don't Control Affiliate Marketing Programs

You don't own affiliate marketing programs; you have to use existing ones. This means, you are dependent on your merchant's rules. A program that looks appealing at a time, later can become less competitive and you won't be able to adjust the terms yourself. All you can do is to negotiate the further alignment, like discounts on products. Then wait for the merchant to put changes in place.

2. You Don't Control Your Competition

Competition varies depending on the industry. As there are strong benefits of joining affiliate business, a lot of people try their hand at affiliate marketing. Anyone can join and be successful.

3. **You Can't Establish Your Customer Base**

You commit to driving new leads again and again, unless you engage in marketing affiliate programs that provide recurring commission. Fortunately, some affiliate marketing programs include recurring payments and this translates to fixed recurring commissions.

SIDE NOTE:

Take a look at [LiveChat Affiliate Marketing Program](#). Our affiliate program offers a 20% recurring commission for the life of the customer!



4. **No Guarantee of Revenue**

The performance-based business model can be either a tremendous opportunity or a significant risk. No one says you'll earn a stable income right away. It's a challenge you'll have to face and put all your efforts into maximizing the opportunity. All in all, it's difficult to predict your revenues upfront.

5. **Freelance jobs aren't for everyone**

It takes a specific personality to feel comfortable with such a working style. In some circumstances, freelancing

can result in the isolation. But there are ways to overcome such condition. Find your comfort zone and a working space outside and go there every day.

6. Quantity Approach

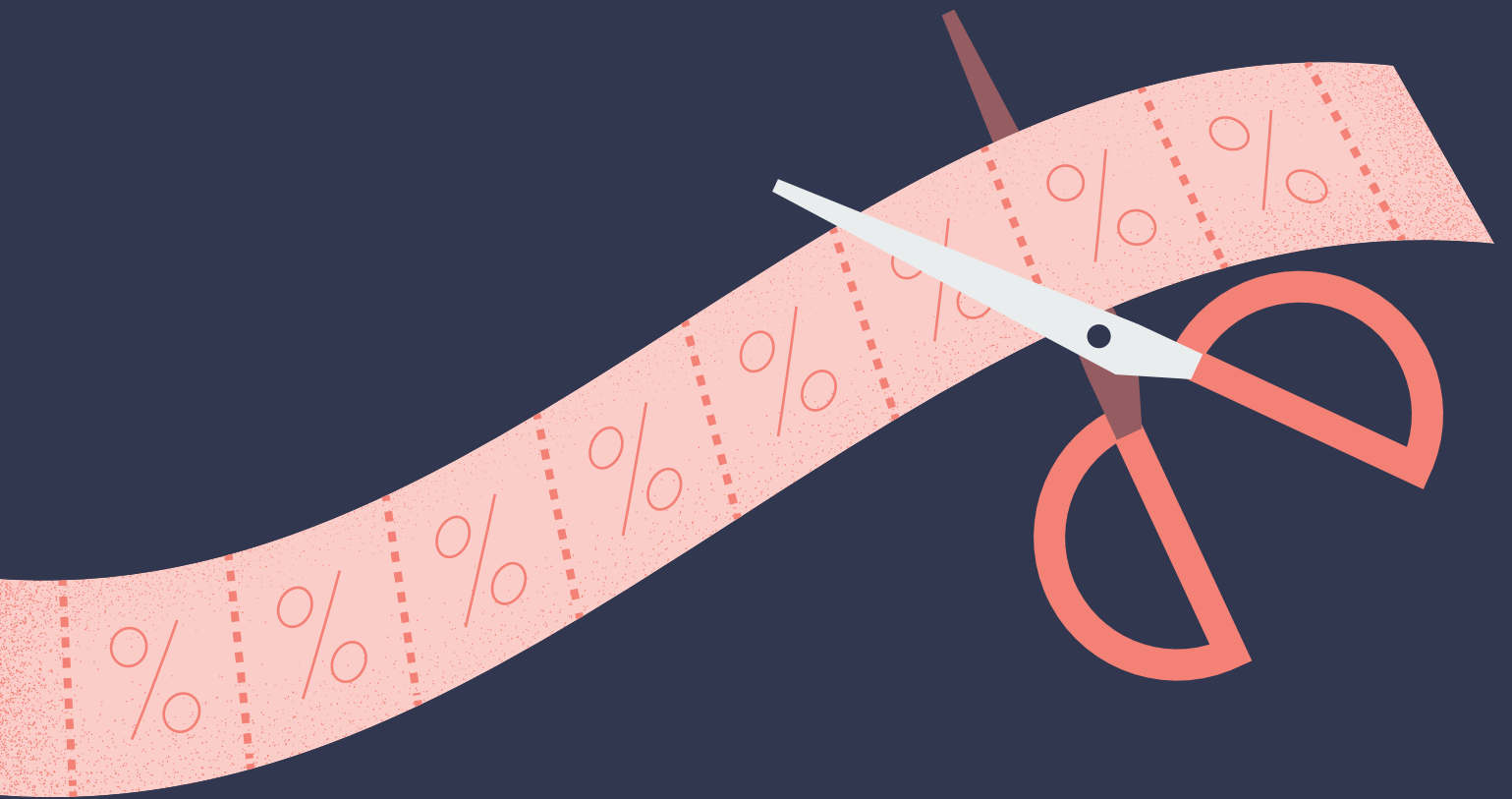
Affiliate marketing gets associated with spammy marketing campaigns at times. Unfortunately, there is some truth to that. Simply put, short-sighted affiliates tend to produce spammy and misleading content. They paste it all around expecting quick wins.

7. Affiliate Links Hijacking

Although this doesn't come often, there are cases of hijacking affiliate links. This way the fraudster gets someone's commission. Then it's hardly possible to get it back. So you can just hope that such an affiliate scam won't target you.

II

Savvy Affiliate Marketing Techniques



In the meantime, big businesses were becoming more aware of online marketing business potential. Corporations started to drive more effort, focus, and budget into their online presence. *Google* started to favor big brands in the SERPs (Search Engines Results Pages) shaking up its search results. Blogs transformed. As a result, many blogs were dwarfed by business blogs with larger readership and authority.

Then, *Google* also started to downgrade low-quality and dated affiliate sites that didn't follow SEO best practices.

This shift illustrates the need of adapting your product to your customers.

Yet, affiliate marketing isn't dead. Marketers had to move on and put in place new mature online marketing techniques. You can still be successful as an affiliate, but it takes a quality approach and embracing best blueprints.

1. Coupons

Coupons have been a considerable part of affiliate marketing for many years. As an affiliate, you can rely on coupons to let your customers get a discount offer and a great deal on a particular product. After all, as long as you'll help people save some money, they are going to keep coming back. For instance, take a look how [a coupon promoting LiveChat can be applied](#).

The essential component of this strategy is always to share the best deals that are at your disposal. Even if the commission isn't going to be high, you'll build up the trust of your audience, and it'll pay back. Users are going to keep checking back on your site anytime they want to buy another product. Therefore, you should be thinking strategically here and go for a long-term approach to your payoffs.

Coupons can be submitted either to special deals sites or your dedicated website. Apart from coupons themselves, you should also add some value such as information about a product and work on user interaction.

Thus, make sure you allow your users to get involved. Let them comment on your offer, rate your product, join the community forum, etc.

Coupon affiliate marketing has many benefits:

- you provide discounts, and this is always more than welcome
- it isn't heavy on content, so if you don't enjoy writing long blog posts, this strategy can be an excellent fit for you
- you don't need to stick to a single niche, but mix and match more
- many coupons and deal sites are spammy, so if you maintain quality and earn valuable backlinks, you're going to stand out

Competition gets dense depending on the niche and reliance on SEO. But these two challenges are inherent to all online marketing strategies.

2. PPC advertising

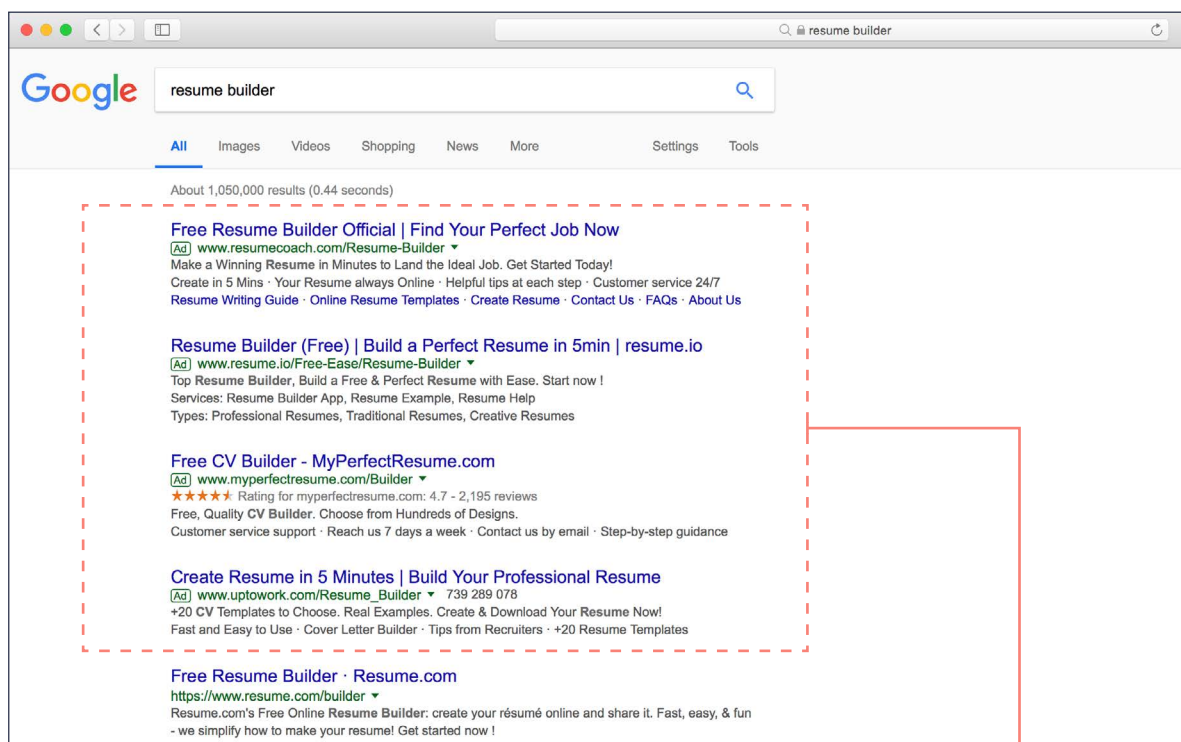
Use paid advertising to promote your affiliate programs. This technique will help you grow your mailing lists, promote webinars and *YouTube* videos, or direct searches to vendor's website(s).

PPC advertising is a way of leveraging search engines to drive targeted traffic to a particular landing page. In this model, you won't pay for placing your ad on a search results page, but for individual clicks. PPC is the art of purchasing and optimizing the ads for the given phrases.

When users type keywords into search engine, your ads can pop up in one of several ad placements of the SERPs depending on a search engine.

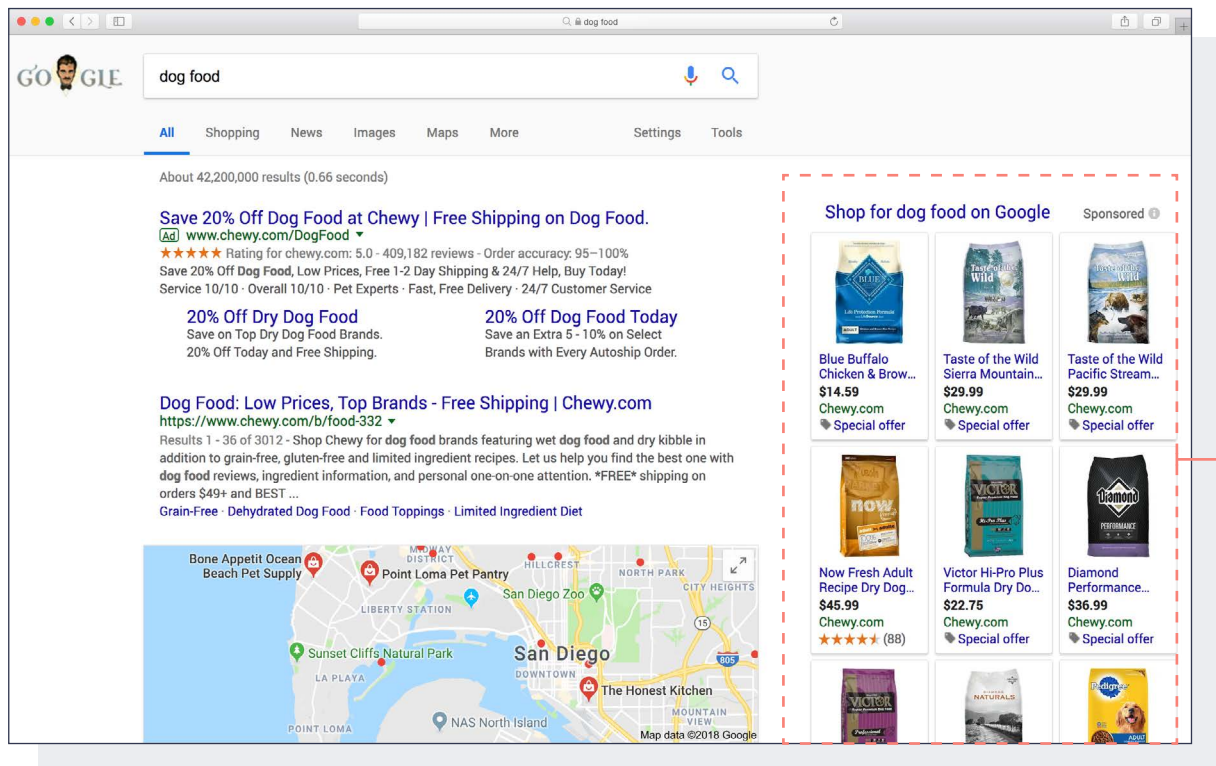
Your ad can appear:

- at the top of a search results page



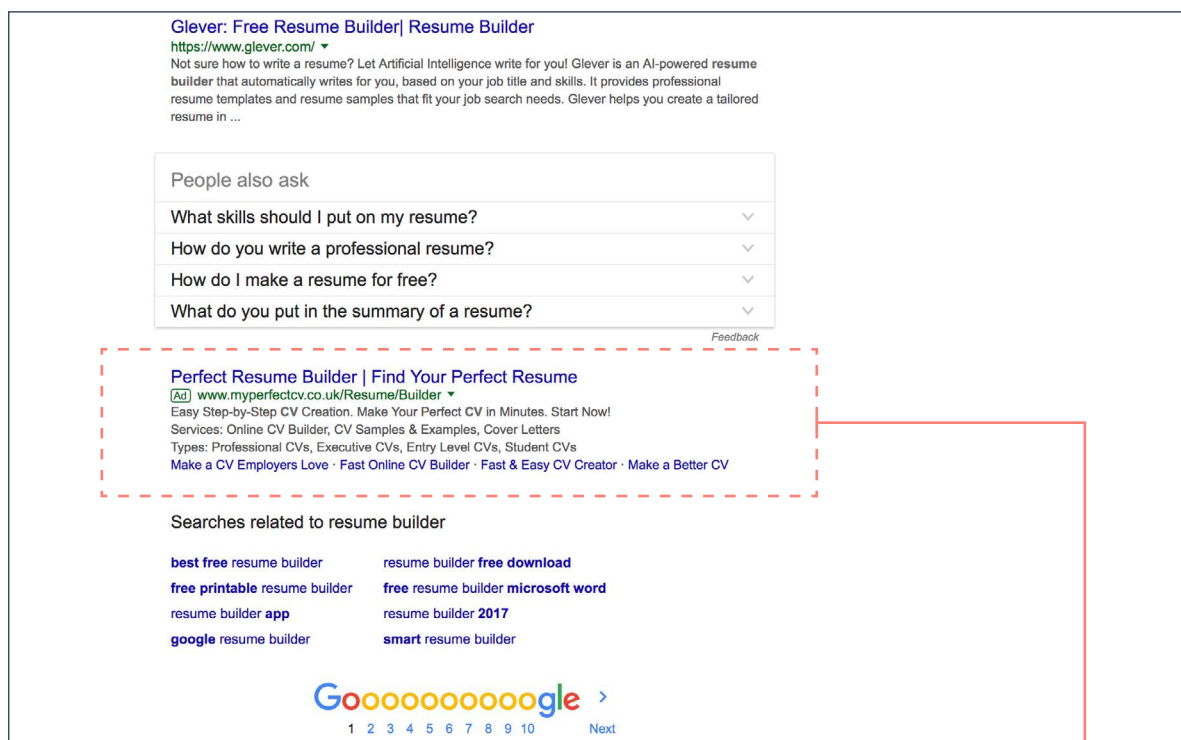
Example from *Google*, ad at the top of a search results page

- on the right side of the search results page



Example from *Google*, ad on the right side of a search results page (However, Google will no longer show ads to the right of its search results, with two exceptions)

- at the bottom of the search results page



Example from *Google*, ad at the bottom of a search results page

Many affiliates get hooked on PPC because this channel allows them to sell immediately. Yet, it requires some know-how and funds.

So how to use ppc advertising for affiliate marketing?

First, make sure you get in-depth knowledge of PPC. Once you dig deeper, you'll realize that it's not enough to outbid your competitors. *Google* evaluates the quality of ads and favors

the more appealing ones. Well-curated ads generate more clicks and are listed higher.

FURTHER READING AND LEARNING:

- Learn what you need to succeed with *Google ads*
[Google Academy for Ads](#)
.....
- Explore *Adwords* alternatives and get an idea on how to go beyond *Google* and diversify your advertising budget
[9 Best Alternatives To Google AdWords](#)

3. Writing Reviews

A review-focused affiliate blog is a great place to start your adventure with affiliate marketing. As a marketer you probably use many tools on a daily basis – and these are not only marketing tools.

I bet there are many personal products you use every day. You could become a spokesperson for them as an affiliate (of course, if they have an affiliate program). So if you are an

affiliate marketing beginner, you could start with that. Create a site and start writing about your favorite products. Also, release your opinion to the public in the form of affiliate reviews.

This technique is called **involved affiliate marketing** by Pat Flynn. According to Pat, it's most effective because using the product you're selling is the best seal of approval.

FURTHER READING:

[How To Write A Powerful Product Review in 8 Simple Steps](#)

How to Come Up with a Good Product Review

Make sure your review is helpful and talks about a product comprehensively. It should showcase its benefits and shouldn't hide any flaws or defects. Coming up with educational, honest, and in-depth product reviews will boost your authority and win you a loyal audience. And this audience will be made up of people who trust your opinion. Of course, this comes with a responsibility that shouldn't be taken lightly.

Loyalty is one of the crucial factors for a review-focused affiliate marketer. You should add affiliate links to these

reviews at the right places. But, if you only rely on your on-line reviews to drive your affiliate income, then you need a lot of traffic.

Maximize your affiliate site's results by implementing SEO best practices and ensure it ranks high in search engines. Running a review blog might be time-consuming – it takes time to build up a reputation, strong following, and a high traffic volume.

That's why it's not a fast way to make money online. But in the long run, for a determined content creator, it may become a stable stream of passive income. Review writing is the exact opposite of PPC, since in PPC the customer may not even know you exist.

Run a blog

Apart from a review site, you can **run a blog** targeted on the strategic keywords that includes affiliate links. If you decide to become this kind of blogger, then it's all about the content strategy you choose to follow.

FURTHER READING:

[How to Start an Affiliate Marketing Blog Step by Step Guide](#)

Affiliate marketing without a site

You can also become an affiliate marketer without any website. Surprised? Well, don't be. Sure, it involves implementing other kinds of affiliate marketing techniques but it's possible. It takes 3 steps to succeed at affiliate marketing without a website:

- research the relevant 3rd party blogs and websites and then contribute
- become a community leader – post on *Quora* or *Reddit* and establish your authority there
- fall in love with social media

FURTHER READING:

[Affiliate Marketing: 4 Ways to Succeed Without a Website](#)

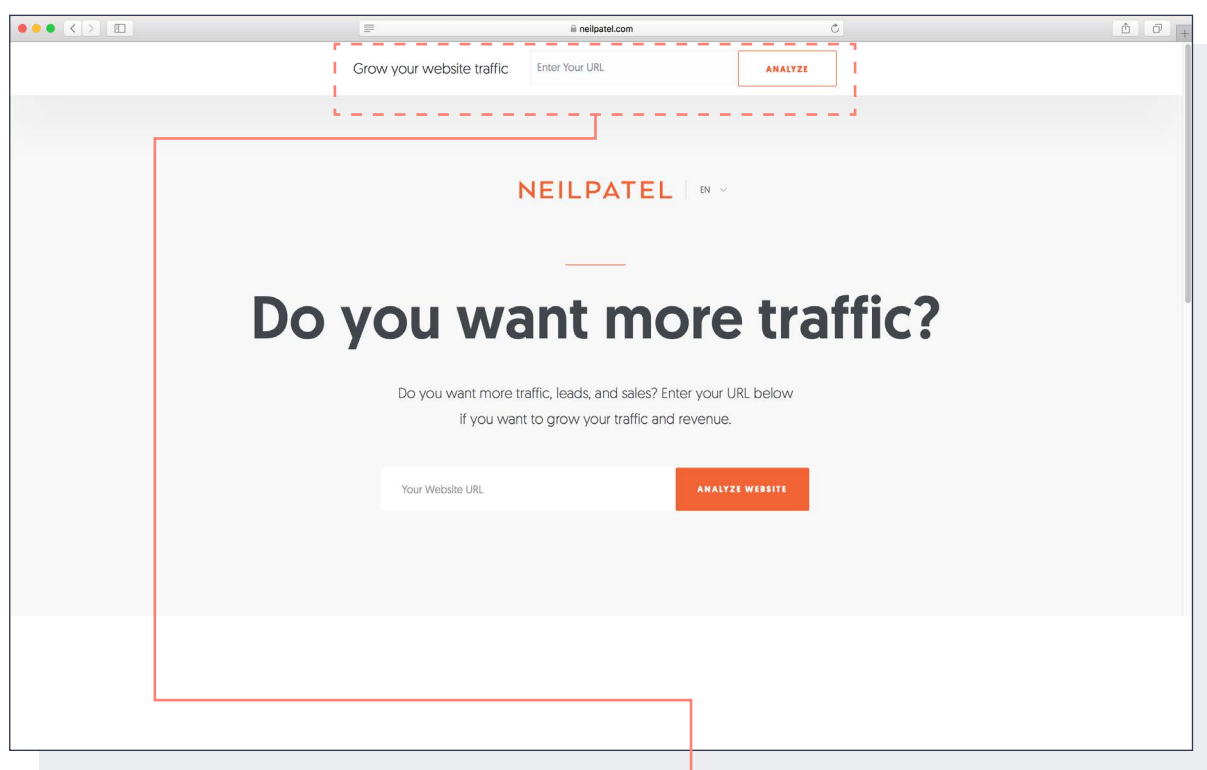
4. Email Marketing

Have you heard that email is the most efficient online channel these days? It makes it reasonable to leverage email marketing in your affiliate strategy. How? If you own a site, you can add several subscribe buttons here and there to help you build your mailing lists.

A subscribe button can come in a form of:

- **hello bar**

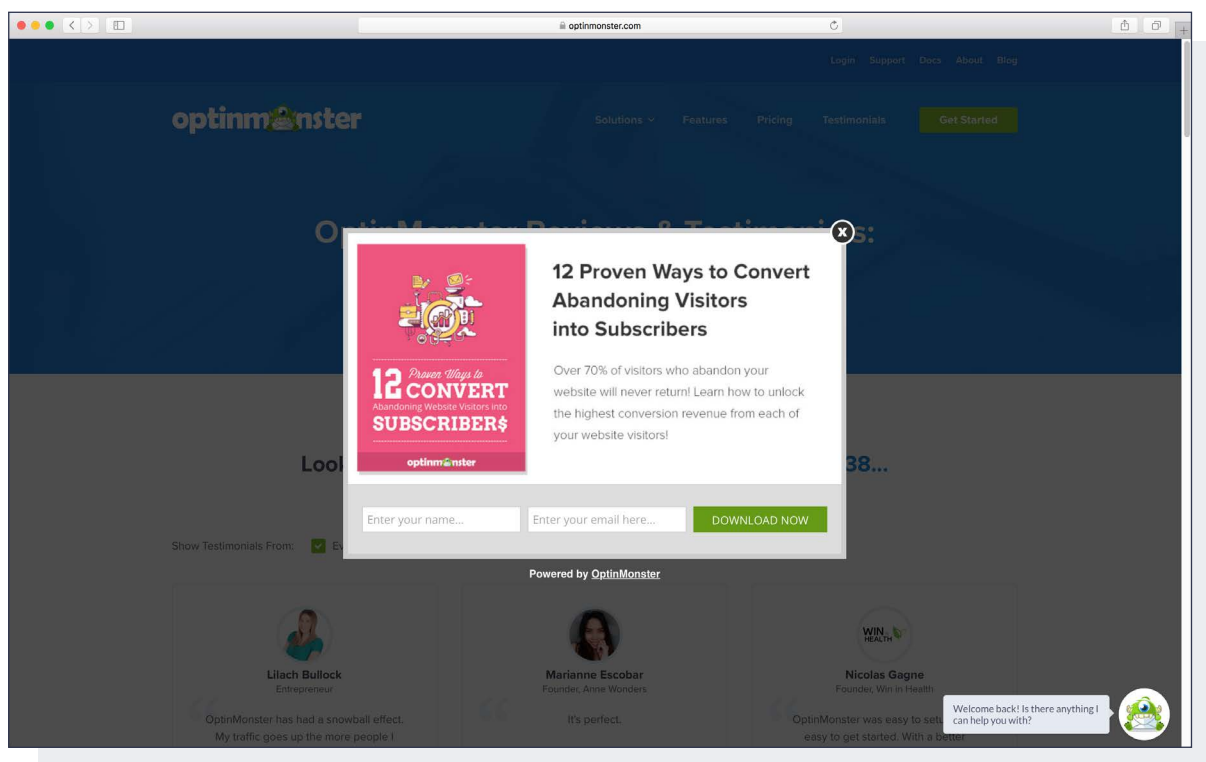
placed at the top of your blog or the homepage. This way, every visitor will see it. Hello bars can promote marketing offers that will be sent to the user's inbox in exchange for the email address and name they provide.



Source: [Neil Patel](#), example of a hello bar.

- **behaviour popup**

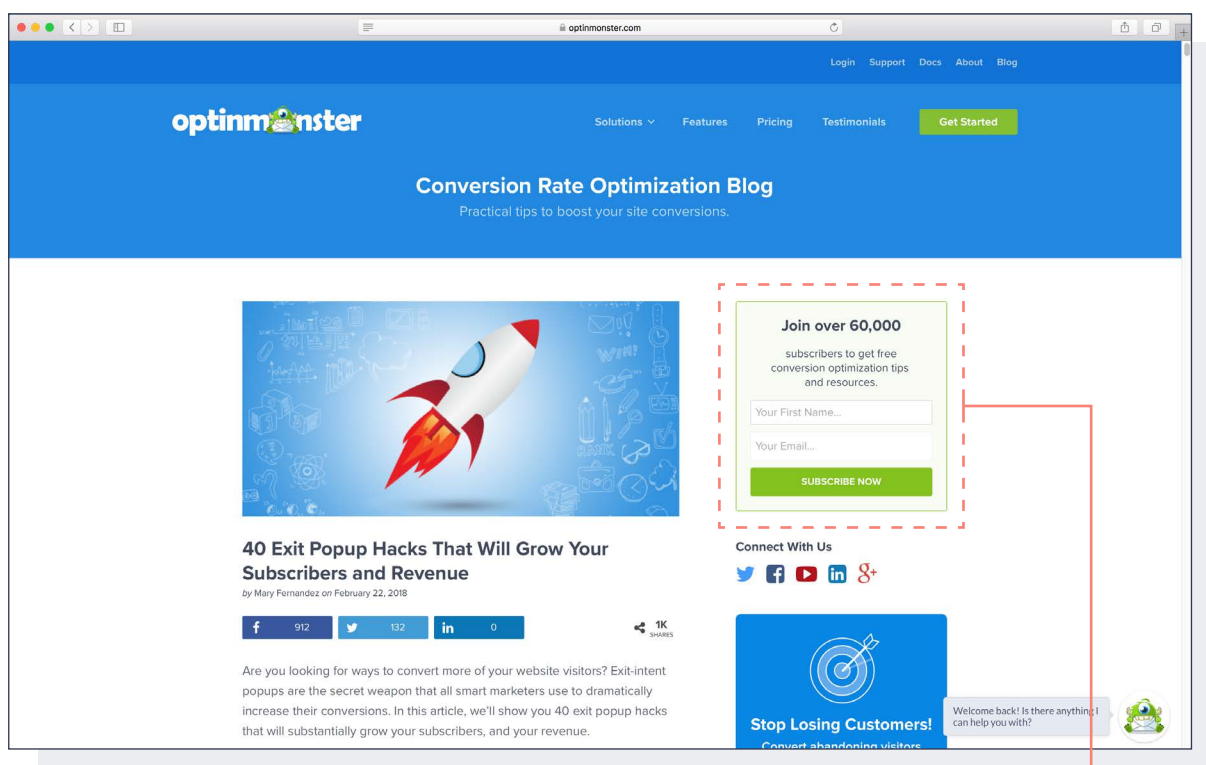
apart from the hello bar, you can install, for instance, a behaviour popup that gets triggered when the user is about to exit the tab. Take a look at the example of an exit popup:



Source: [OptinMonster](https://www.optinmonster.com), exit popup as an example of a behaviour popup.

- **sidebar widget**

It can serve not only as a great way to gain more newsletter subscribers, but also to promote special offers you have on your website or drive traffic to other content (including blog posts, webinars, and landing pages).



Source: [OptinMonster](https://www.optinmonster.com), example of sidebar widget.

There are other creative options available to grow your email list. Add content upgrades at the end of your articles. This way, you are building up your user base which you can later use for weekly newsletters or updates. Make sure your emails are regular, engaging, and relevant to their interest.

5. Use Webinars to Promote Products

Webinars are becoming more and more popular because they are awesome. Webinars allow you to reach your audience on a unique level that content sites, PPC, or email marketing just can't match. Let's say you want to buy a sophisticated product. What would you prefer to do to understand its functions and usability?

- You can read its documentation, product descriptions, and guides,
- or you can join a live webinar and the host guides you through all the possible benefits and ways of using a product. You can actively ask any questions that come to mind, and they get answered immediately.

What seems like a better product introduction to you? I would go for the second option. Webinars are a great chance to educate your audience about an individual product in an interactive and user-friendly way.

How to start using webinars in affiliate marketing:

- practice the role of the host before you start live streaming to help you get more comfortable
- prepare an outline with the key points you would like to include in a webinar and arrange them in a coherent order
- create a few sneak peaks, upload them to *Youtube*, and promote them on social media
- once live streaming is over, keep your video on the site to share it with people who didn't join your webinar. This way, your work can snowball your income over time.

FURTHER READING:

[How to Use Webinars in Affiliate Marketing](#)

6. Use *Facebook*

Among social networks, *Facebook* is the largest player and most powerful online advertising network that has ever existed. Almost everyone has a profile there. It would be a shame not to leverage this platform in your marketing strategies.

Sure, you might as well market your affiliate campaigns on social media and figure things out by trial and error. Cut to the chase by reading what we have for you here.

Create a *Facebook* Page

The most fundamental thing to accomplish on *Facebook* is to establish your social presence by creating your own *Facebook* business page. Since you own a website (and a brand), it's imperative that you also create your own spot on social media.

Facebook Page is completely free to set up:

- select a proper page type
- choose a relevant category
- create a unique and memorable username
- add a relevant profile picture
- add cover image that conveys your branding
- build up your business identity by using clear description

- customize the URL for your profile to boost its findability
- add a CTA button to the top of your page, so your visitors can perform any action you're counting on

Apparently, setting up a *Facebook Page* is just the beginning; it doesn't fix anything per se, apart from defining your social presence on the platform.

Build Up Social Presence

Once you have a *Facebook Page* up and running, you should bring it to life and keep it active by posting regularly. Therefore, prepare content strategy for *Facebook* and a publishing calendar for month or two. Then optimize the timing and spot the winning patterns to maximize the results.

Give *Facebook* Advertising a Try

What's important, when you're starting out with paid campaigns on *Facebook* it to adopt the right mindset and understand that whatever you spend on advertising, you're also spending on data. And this isn't money wasted. Even if you don't scale up and make money right away – you are learning how to market on the platform – and that's priceless.

Each product and niche is different and they all resonate differently. Test your affiliate offers, copy, collect data and

draw your conclusions. See what campaigns convert best and assemble these pieces of the puzzle to figure out how specific offers and ads work. Eventually, you will find your winners and losers.

One thing that makes *Facebook* so exceptional is the enormous user base and the ability to laser target your ideal customer. *Facebook Ads* seem to be easier to harness than *Google Adwords*. Your ads can promote specific products and affiliate links if you'd like, but you can also use them in conjunction with a blog.

Facebook Business Groups

The objectives of *Facebook* groups differ from those of *Facebook* pages. Groups offer visibility and networking. Business groups aim to connect various experts and people who are interested in a given topic. Group offers a bit more exposure, too.

By default, members usually get notified about new posts and replies, which tends to keep the conversation alive. It's an excellent idea for you to join relevant groups and promote your affiliate campaigns there (at a reasonable frequency). You can even go a step further and create a business group on *Facebook*. You'll be its administrator, so you'll get to set the rules.

FURTHER READING:

[Affiliate Marketing on Facebook: 3 Actionable Ways to Get Started](#)

Wrapping Up

As you see now, there are practical ideas and strategies to put in place once you become an affiliate marketer. All the affiliate marketing techniques mentioned in this guide will generate a stable stream of commissions if applied wisely.

Maintain an open-minded attitude towards online marketing trends and search engine algorithm updates and you're going to keep up with all the changes and perform affiliate marketing your customers will love.

Okay, so now you know what savvy techniques you can use, let's now move on and focus on affiliate links.

III

What are Affiliate Links and How to Use Them Correctly



Affiliate links look and work exactly like any other URL – they connect resources – except for one difference: they serve to pass traffic on to particular affiliate products and, eventually, to drive revenue.

No matter what online marketing strategies you employ, there is only one-way affiliate marketers can monetize their campaigns – through affiliate links. Affiliate links are essential to monitoring the online performance of marketers. And because affiliate marketing is based on the concept of revenue sharing and publishers take a cut, affiliate transactions need to be identified and tracked with precision.

Therefore, vendors give you a unique affiliate ID and this additional information is going to be added to the affiliate link in order to let the vendor know who gets credit for the sale. As a result, affiliate links are comprised of a vendor's URL and your ID.

SIDENOTE:

[Become a LiveChat Partner – Create Your Free Account and Get a Steady Stream of Revenue Flowing in.](#)



How Affiliate Links Look Like

Affiliate link structure example:

<https://www.livechatinc.com/?a=TP8qHaJrCE>

any seller's page referrer's ID

If you want to start using affiliate links, conduct diligent research to get to know your market and identify the best affiliate programs. Then, set up your affiliate blog and start creating content. Publish content on your site and submit it to third-party platforms.

In a case you prefer to run affiliate marketing activities without a website, you can start by submitting your content to third-party platforms only and still be successful.

How to use Affiliate Links Correctly

As soon as you have your exclusive affiliate link, you can sprinkle it evenly throughout your content. However, before you go ahead pasting links all over the place, better learn best

practices. Here are some tips for you to optimize your own affiliate website and reap some SEO benefits from the affiliate links.

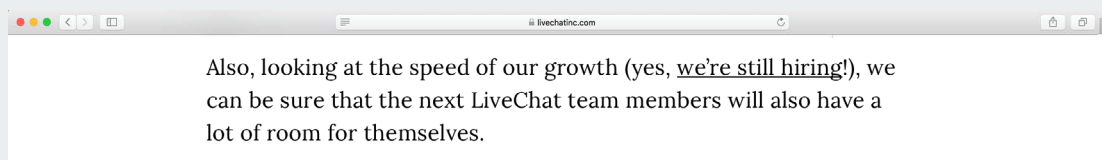
Add Anchors to Affiliate Links

Put affiliate links in the body of the article by making certain words or phrases clickable. Such a hyperlink would look much better than a bare link added to a page:

- <https://www.livechatinc.com/?a=TTjtYIygKy>
- Try LiveChat

Which link looks better to you?

The contextual anchor is much more appealing – it’s clear, user-friendly and looks nice, in contrast to the bare link (especially that the latter contains dynamic parameters and looks messy). Make the **anchor text*** of your affiliate link descriptive and relevant to the linked source. Your users should understand where they will go once they click through. Here is a good example (although this particular link isn’t an affiliate link, the same rule applies):



*Just to let you know the anchor text is the visible and clickable phrase on a page.

Affiliate Links Density

Balance your affiliate links density. One way of balancing the number of links you paste in your copy is to include one affiliate link per one piece of content (page, article or review). Although this is the best solution when it comes to promoting your affiliate campaigns, this is also more time consuming and work demanding than adding various affiliate links to one lengthy post.

No matter what approach you choose to follow, the main point here is not to go too heavy on the links.

According to Brian Dean:

Affiliate links themselves probably won't hurt your rankings. But if you have too many, *Google's* algorithm may pay closer attention to other quality signals to make sure you're not a "thin affiliate site".

Find a healthy balance between monetization and user experience. Make sure you bring value and educate your visitors about the chosen topics.

The goal is not to monetize every page, but for every page to be a potential gateway to monetization.

Put affiliate links where they make sense. A good content to links ratio would be 1 link per every 1.000 words. This rule will help you ultimately avoid keyword stuffing.

Tidy Up Your Affiliate Links

Make your affiliate links clean and more user-friendly. Even if your affiliate link is hidden behind a relevant and descriptive anchor, it's always a good practice to clean it up, making it even more readable and understandable for your users. Of course, you should be careful doing this because in some circumstances there is a risk that your merchant will find it harder to determine the source of traffic or the affiliate's id.

Links containing dynamic parameters are long and often look ugly. This can deter users from clicking them, mainly because people fear ever-present spam. They also react negatively to promotional links.

Take a look at the example provided by Sugarrae: This is how affiliate link for *OptinMonster* looks without cloaking: <http://www.shareasale.com/r.cfm?b=601672&u=313242&m=49337&urlink=&afftrack=>

And here is an affiliate link for *OptinMonster* after tidying it up: <https://sugarrae.com/getit/optinmonster>

Now you see the difference?

These two links lead to the same destination, and they both track the same affiliate cookie correctly. Which one looks better and more trustworthy to you? And which one would you prefer to click? If you use *WordPress*, there is a pretty helpful plugin that makes your affiliate links more beautiful right away.

Pretty Links lets you use tidy links and describe them according to your preference. Typical link shorteners such as bit.ly shrink your links, but don't make them more readable. They still appear spammy to the visitor.

Apart from masking your affiliate links, *Pretty Links* features a hits tracker and a reporting interface where you can see a configurable chart summarizing clicks day by day – so you can use it to measure clicks from various campaigns – including emails, social media, etc. You'll find more information about affiliate link cloaking here: How to Cloak Affiliate Links (& Why You Should).

Also, at *LiveChat Partner Program*, we've got a link shortener that makes affiliate links look clean (so they look like that – lc.chat/xyz) and include / track all the parameters correctly.

Sign up and see it **for yourself**

Sign up →

Nofollow Affiliate Links

Another good practice which you can and should use is adding the `rel="nofollow"` attribute to your affiliate links. As *Google* isn't big on affiliate links, it's a good idea to nofollow them to avoid the risk of having your site penalized. How does it work? Put simply, once you add a nofollow attribute, *Google* will ignore the link (i.e., it won't get the upvote mentioned before).

Here is a short video, where Danny Sullivan asked Matt Cutts about using a nofollow tag for affiliate links.



You & A with Matt Cutts – keynote conversation at *SMX Advanced* in Seattle, VI 2012.
Source: [SMX YouTube channel](#)

Wrapping up: If you deliver great content and want to preserve your SEO ranking, just nofollow affiliate links.

Simple as that.

How to add the nofollow attribute to an affiliate link?

1. Log in to your *WordPress* panel
2. Go into your new post
3. Switch to HTML view by clicking the **Text tab**
4. Find your affiliate links (use **CMD + G**)
5. And just add **rel="nofollow"** within the a tag

By default a link looks like this in HTML:

```
<a href="https://www.livechatinc.com">Affiliate Marketing</a>
```

Once you nofollow a link, it looks like this:

```
<a href="https://www.livechatinc.com"rel="nofollow">Affiliate Marketing</a>
```

Implement Them The Right Way

Affiliate links can technically be used everywhere, so this is your call on how to play it. Your whole strategy for affiliate links should be compelling and well-balanced. Optimize it for best results. Be subtle and contextual. Also, make sure you don't appear spammy.

Blog Posts

Insert your links into blog posts where it makes sense, and it's relevant. In general, it's up to you as long as your primary intention is to be helpful and provide information which helps users solve real problems.

Sidebar

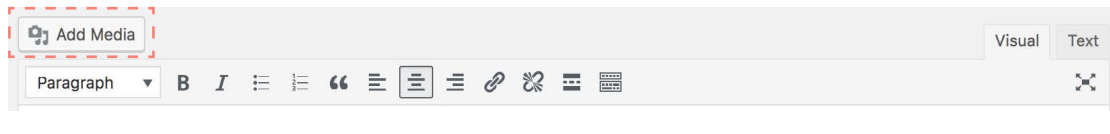
Another option is to put your affiliate links on a sidebar within your blog. In this case, your content links shall be accompanied with clickable banners. This method can supplement the affiliate links in your copy and still look non-intrusive and user-friendly as long as your sidebar banners are limited and in number and embrace the same style.

Visuals

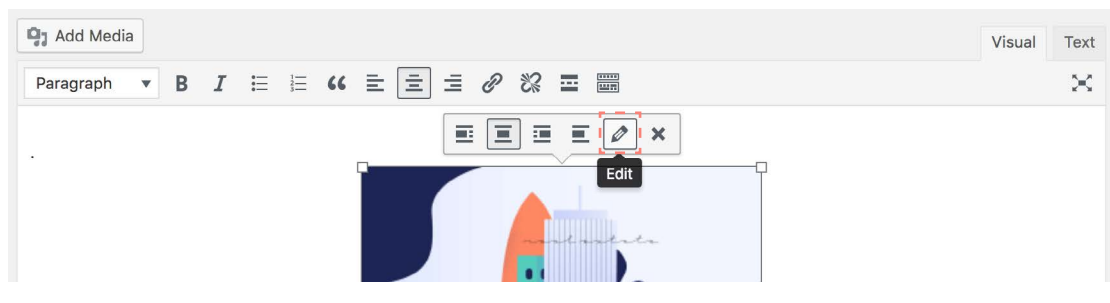
Another good idea is to link relevant visuals, so they are clickable. This makes sense especially if you are reviewing your affiliate products. This way if a user clicks on an image added to your post, they'll click through to a particular product page.

How to make your visuals clickable in the *WordPress* panel?

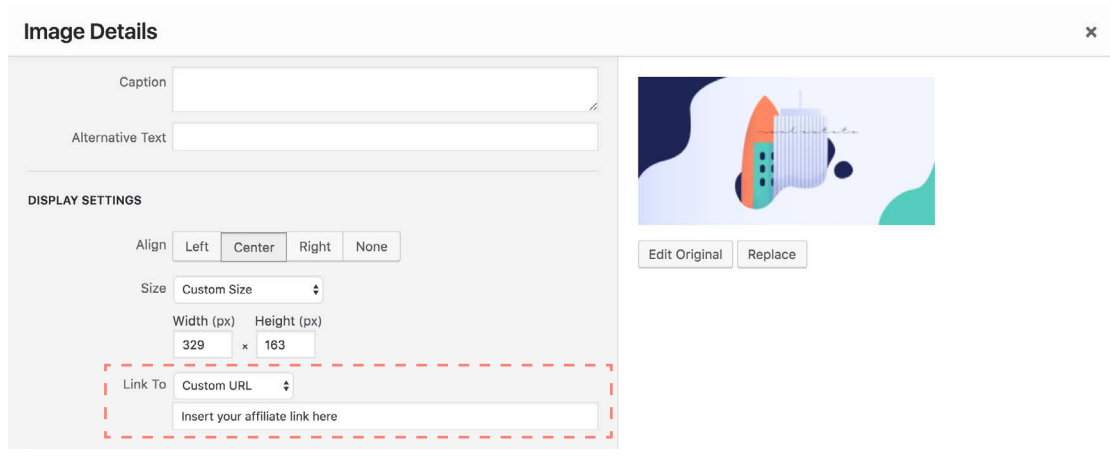
1. Once you login go into your *WordPress* panel, create a new post and click on Add Media button in the editor.



2. Once you add your graphic, click on it and open the image editor.



3. Next, change the display settings, so the visual leads to a custom url instead of leading to a media file.



4. Finally, update the settings and preview your draft to see if your image leads to the right landing page, product page or any other preferred destination.

Apart from these few spots, there is a wide variety of locations where affiliate links may fit in. Read what Pat Flynn (who is a super affiliate) recommends: [Multiple Strategies I Use For Affiliate Marketing: Where To Put Affiliate Links.](#)

Disclose Affiliate Links

It's necessary to disclose affiliate links, so you present a transparent and honest attitude towards your users/readers. **Set up an affiliate links disclosure section on your sites.** This way, you will be transparent with your visitors. No one is going to be in the dark or complain about your methods.

An affiliate links disclosure section can be written up along these lines:

Disclosure of *Material Connection*:

Some of the links in the post above may be affiliate links. This means if you click on the link and purchase the item, I will receive an affiliate commission. Regardless, I only recommend products or services I use personally and believe will add value to my readers. I am disclosing this in accordance with the *Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255: Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising.* – [source](#)

Disclose your links properly and always follow FCT requirements.

Again, make sure, such a statement is clear and straight to the point. Don't hide the fact that you earn money on affiliate links. Finally, be consistent, use the same disclosure message throughout your affiliate sites. This will make its contents familiar to your visitors and decrease confusions that may otherwise arise.

Transparency is always welcome in the affiliate business. What's more, it is a win-win solution for the vendor and the affiliate. Seek out affiliate programs that are transparent and also introduce best practices in transparency into all your actions. This will never hamper your growth and reputation.

By now, you should already understand what are affiliate links, what they're used for, how to apply them correctly to your content sites and disclose them efficiently. Let's now move on to the more actionable part and guide you through the process of starting an affiliate business.

IV

How to Start an Affiliate Marketing Business From Scratch



Affiliate marketing is a business that lets you make money through a commission by selling third-party products. Your revenue is performance-based, so if you are a determined and skilled specialist, you'll get results fast.

Read up on the deets in this chapter to see how to get your affiliate marketing gig up and running. We have broken down this process into 5-ish actionable steps for affiliate marketing beginners.

Think about your favorite products, apps, and tools you use daily. Find out if the brands behind them offer affiliate partnership programs.

If so, then do research and get to know these brands, their products, and their key selling points. Once you figure out which program is right for you, join it. Next, move on to creating affiliate campaigns.

Avoid jumping into saturated industries. Make sure the playground you choose offers room for you. Any ideas for promoting your product might work if done right. You'll quickly find out what products are easy for you to promote.

Perhaps you could hit the ground running
by promoting LiveChat?

Join now →

Launch a few trial campaigns and see how they resonate with your visitors and what happens. And, of course, understand what brings money to the table.

Give it a try and learn about yourself: what skills you own and what suits you as a marketer. In the end, remember to look at it from a business perspective, not a question of personal preference. No matter what you choose, getting results is your primary goal.

Work With Proven Affiliate Programs Only

What has made affiliate marketing so successful is its convenience for all involved counter-parties. On the other hand, you might have heard that it's a phony business and you can lose money on it. Well, both statements are true.

Among proven, established affiliate programs and networks, there are fraudsters wanting to take advantage of your effort. Like everywhere. To avoid them, don't let yourself be tempted by the promise of easy and quick money.

Affiliate marketing is known for its convenience, but it does not offer a shortcut to making money overnight. What you should remember is to stick to affiliate programs of companies with established position on the market.

By the way, on the High Paying Affiliate Programs you'll find plenty of proven partnerships from various niches to choose from. And perhaps, *LiveChat* with over 23,000 customers worldwide and 15 years of experience on the market might be interesting to you.

Proven affiliate programs won't lure you with promises of easy money and won't expect you to pay for joining them. They benefit whenever their affiliates earn, so it's their goal to engage with as many affiliates as possible.

“



Bill Burniece
CEO of *High Paying*
Affiliate Programs

Reputation is everything in online marketing. Building relationships and trust with both referral partners and end-customers should be the number one goal of any ethical and reputable affiliate program. Once a company loses that trust it's nearly impossible to get it back again.

Start an Affiliate Website

While former points considered your overall approach to affiliate marketing, this one is about taking action. There's of course a number of ways to become a successful affiliate marketer without a website, but I'd recommend you creating a site. It will make your work a lot easier.

Companies like GoDaddy offer bundle deals in which you can get domain and hosting services straight away and on the cheap. All you have to do then is to install *WordPress* CMS (Content Management System) and pick a dedicated theme for it.

As you can see setting up a website isn't a difficult or labor-intensive task these days. This can get even easier with *WordPress*.

Your affiliate site can be built in one place.

This world famous CMS platform enables you to create a website in a few simple steps. The best part is that you can manage the whole site from there. This includes buying a custom domain, hosting the site, and choosing an appropriate theme and fonts. All this is done through a beautiful, responsive and user-friendly panel.

There are three rules for creating a website is to:

- deliver high-quality content
- follow the best practices in everything you do
- win the reputation and trust of your visitors bit-by-bit

You can build a plain site 100% free of cost. With the support of amazing tutorials on wpbeginner.com, you'll get your site ready within an hour. Your affiliate marketing efforts will get a professional touch with it. :)

“



Syed Balkhi
the Founder of
WPBeginner

Worth mentioning is the fact that most affiliate programs expect you to own a site and will ask you to submit its URL before you join their programs. This happens because merchants want to ensure your website and content won't hurt their reputation. Hence, you might be obliged to create your website right at the beginning of your affiliate journey.

Find Your Niche

When you distinguish proven affiliate programs from fake ones, it's time to consider what niche would you like to be

active in. Choose topics you already feel passionate about. Following your passions is recommendable to make this start a little less restless.

The easiest way to conduct your research is to dig deep into *Google* or any other search engine. Search for “your keyword + affiliate” to start with. This method will help you find a selection of appropriate affiliate marketing programs.

It’s worth mentioning that big brands use affiliate networks, too. Thus, if you’re looking for an affiliate programs of well-known companies, check out popular networks.

- [Commission Junction](#)
- [Linkshare](#)
- [Shareasale](#)
- [eBay Enterprise](#)
- [Clickbank](#)
- [e-Junkie](#)
- [Avangate](#)

Also, if you have favorite products and brands, check out their websites directly. If they run partnerships, relevant information should be found among other internal links in the footer on each page of a given site. A website’s footer always features a list of all critical internal links because this helps with navigating the site.

The best brands and products have a pristine reputation and high brand recognition, and this makes their products easier to sell.

Moreover, you have to determine whether it's better to work with independent affiliate programs or with large affiliate networks. Either of these approaches have its pros and cons but it would be hard for you to efficiently combine your activity in both of them. If you want to work independently, I'd suggest you choosing SaaS affiliate programs.

SaaS affiliate programs are usually higher paying, due to the value of software they offer. While it may take a bit more effort to find a customer for B2B-oriented software, revenues from closed deals are incomparable. What's even more enticing, some of SaaS affiliate programs sell monthly recurring licenses and – therefore – offer fixed recurring commissions! In fact, that's the approach we took at LiveChat Partner Program.

SIDENOTE:

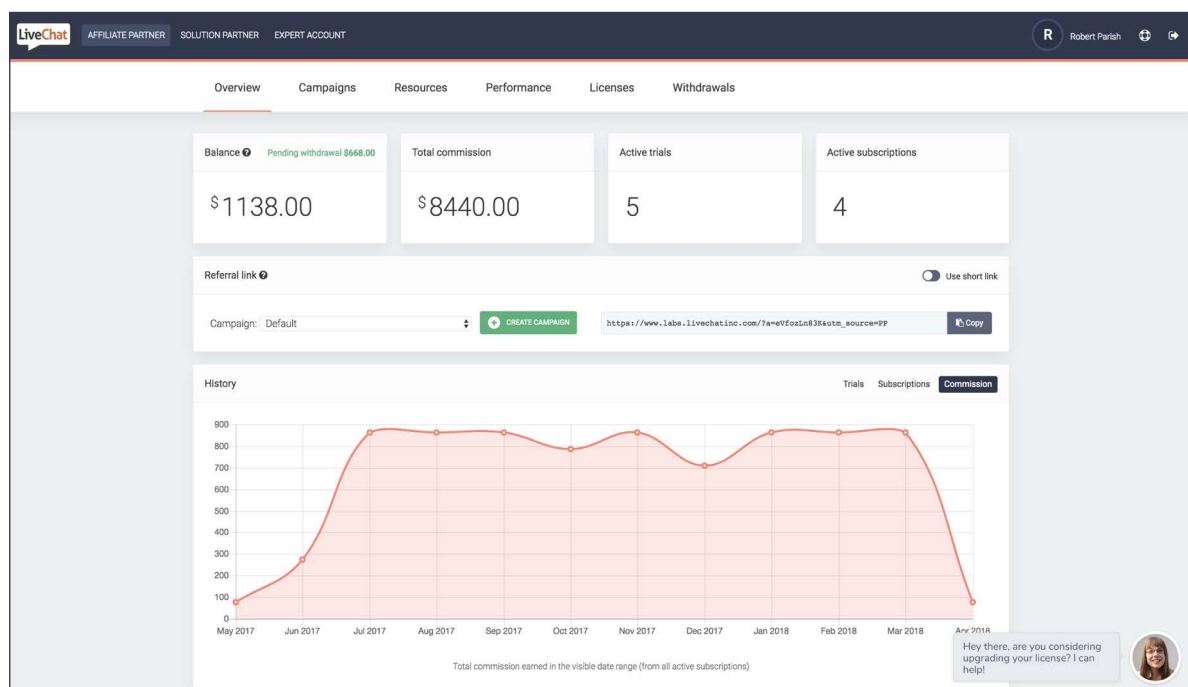
Once affiliate partners manage to sell our software, they receive a 20% recurring commission for as long as the license they brought us is up and running. While some licenses are worth \$50/month, other reach up to \$10,000/month value. It's easy to calculate what sort of flow of income can you generate with it.

Remember that reputable companies allow people to become affiliates free of charge. But, don't worry if you are asked for *PayPal* information or your bank account number – the company needs to be able to pay you.

Track Your Performance

Once you join partnership programs, streamline your campaign tracking. Set up a *Google Analytics* and *Google Search Console* to check and optimize users' on-site behavior. You want to get a more in-depth understanding of what works and what doesn't.

Vendors provide their partners with appropriate monitoring panels. Plus, some of them offer APIs, so that you can track your campaign's performance via an affiliate dashboard:



Source: LiveChat Partner Program, an example of affiliate dashboard.

You can use the API to stream your affiliate data to your site.

Joining a performance marketing network such as ShareASale allows you to use their campaign tracking tools.

Yet, take advantage of dedicated affiliate performance trackers such as LeadDyno which are quick to set up and provide extensive real-time reporting.

“



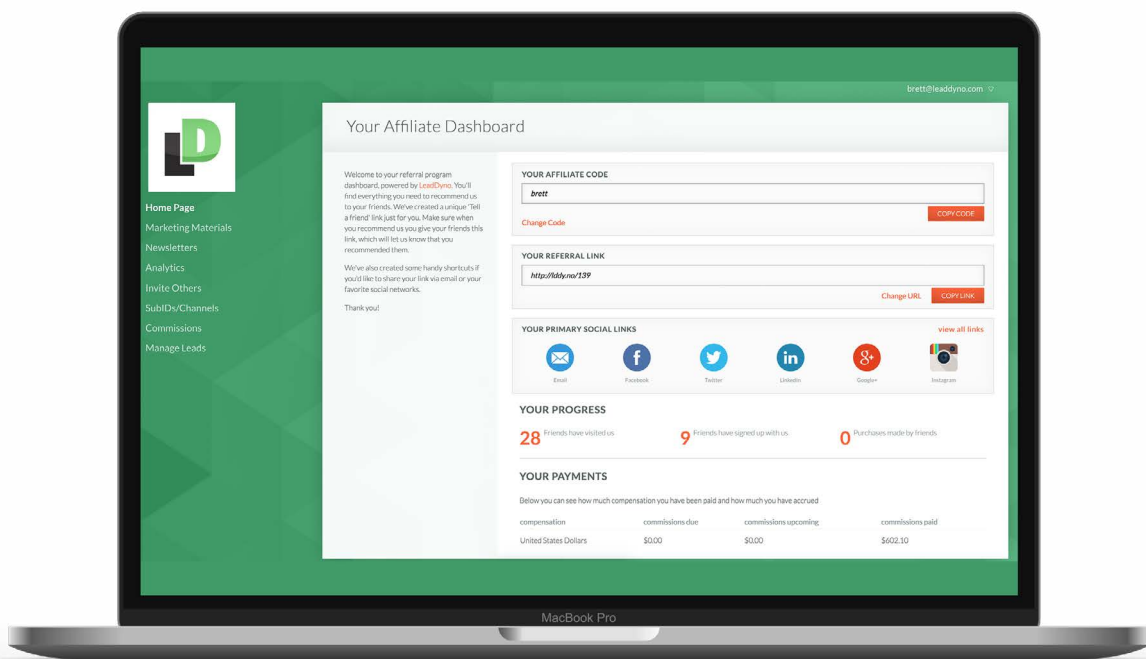
Brett Owens,
Marketing Director
and Co-Founder at
LeadDyno

We learned that giving real-time performance updates to affiliates is a gift that keeps on giving.

Our LeadDyno-powered affiliate dashboards display “sales funnel” metrics in real-time to affiliates. He or she can post their link for the first time, get a click and then verify that they received credit for the referral.

We also heard from many affiliate managers who wanted to provide their ‘power referrers’ with more data. With their guidance, we launched an Affiliate Analytics tool that helps their partners get instant insights into their referrals. They can see which links are sending traffic, which posts are converting the best - and slice and dice their analytics information over a custom date range.

Finally we also learned the importance of making this information mobile accessible and friendly. Affiliates are on their smartphones as much as they're on their computers and tablets, so all sharing links and analytics information should be easily accessible from an Android or iPhone device.



Source: LeadDyno, dashboard.

Implement Creative Strategies

When your performance tracking setup is good to go, you can now focus on crafting compelling campaigns. Of course, Rome wasn't built in a day, and so your affiliate marketing efforts probably won't yield results right away.

Make sure you produce educational and intriguing content of the highest quality. Don't get discouraged if your commission is low at the beginning of your affiliate marketing journey. Like they say – slow and steady wins the race.

A piece of good advice is to put in place various online campaigns and to switch them up. You can include **webinars**, **Youtube videos**, and **product reviews** and see how they perform, and continually optimize their results.

Always improve and adjust your affiliate strategies and test out various approaches. Then, you'll find your winning patterns and see what campaigns can snowball to reach massive success rates. Also, sprinkle affiliate links throughout your content sites by following the best linking practices.

Strive for growth and expand your business. Address common problems and pain points as soon as they come up. Look for new products that people might need. Keep an eye on what your prospects desire and provide them with solutions through your affiliate marketing campaigns.

SEO is the Key

Your marketing activity largely depends on a niche you chose to get yourself involved in. But you'll always need organic traffic. What I suggest you to do regardless of affiliate program you chose, is to focus on: valuable content creation & SEO optimization.

Whatever you add content to your website, make sure it's helpful to your readers, but also optimized for SEO. Need a hand with that? [This post](#) will clarify a lot. What you have to remember is to search for RIGHT keywords related to your niche.

Add Value & Promote

The popular ways of promoting affiliate offers include writing honest product reviews, using in-text content links, email marketing activities and offering unique discounts and special offers. What's crucial, don't be pushy with your efforts. Intrusive promotions are one of the most common mistakes affiliates make.

Design marketing strategy, focused on providing an in-depth explanation of a problem and suggesting ways to solve it.

Affiliate marketing professionals call it presale content. This is what you should put your hands on. Make your content as genuine and insightful as possible and then use various channels and techniques to promote it.

Wrapping Up

In this chapter we've been talking about starting affiliate business from scratch. By now you should have a general understanding of how to approach it.

Let's review the key elements:

- Start with finding a relevant niche,
- Explore affiliate programs and join the lucrative ones,
- Make sure you have your website up and running,
- Track your performance with the use of the right analytical tools,
- Use various affiliate marketing strategies to maximize your effectiveness,
- Deliver value and add your affiliate links strategically,
- Implement SEO.

Now, let's describe how a perfect affiliate marketing program should look like.

V

How to Recognize A Perfect Affiliate Program



While not everyone has a partner program yet, there's already plenty of affiliate programs for marketers to choose from. Such a broad choice of programs allows you to be picky.

Reviewing the terms and conditions, and features of affiliate programs, we could recognize some best practices. What do best affiliate programs have in common? Now, let's draw conclusions about what the perfect affiliate partner program should look like.

Fixed, Recurring Commission

High commission rates are a must in a perfect affiliate program. Such a commission should be fixed and recurring. Thus, it makes sense to join and market SaaS affiliate programs.

SaaS products are in high demand lately. Increasing numbers of entrepreneurs are transitioning their businesses to on-demand cloud software. Marketing SaaS products can be profitable to get a stable stream of revenue on the regular for even a few years.

To give you an apt example, let's look at the LiveChat Partner Program. The average customer lifetime reaches approximately three years here. This sounds like a guarantee of stable and predictable revenue, doesn't it?

As for *LiveChat* – your commission depends on the number of **seats*** a prospect adds to their plan and on the payment frequency. A customer can go for month-to-month or year-to-year billing.

***Just to let you know, seats mean – the number of agents that can log in one account and have active chats at the same time.**

Affiliate Cookie Duration

Another detail you should be paying attention to while reviewing affiliate marketing programs is a cookie life. An affiliate cookie is a small file stored on the user's computer. It's used to identify the site's visitors.

In affiliate marketing, cookies are used to track affiliate referrals. And, such cookies have their expiration date. A cookie's lifespan reflects how much time the buyer has to make you a profit through a given campaign. Let's say a seller sets the cookie duration to 30 days. This means that affiliates have 30 days to seal the deal, once a link has been clicked. When this time is up, that's it – no more profit for you.

But, if a sale is made within this period, it qualifies for a commission. This also applies to all recurring commissions.

Remember: it's the cookie expiration date that decides if it's *deal or no deal*. Thus, the longer the expiration date, the better for the affiliate marketer.

What's the optimal cookie lifetime?

The optimal cookie lifetime becomes a *frequently asked question* for vendors and affiliates alike. In fact, vendors choose the optimal cookie expiration date according to their needs. For instance, it can be based on the average duration between the first visit and the purchase. Also, vendors worry that a prolonged cookie duration may result in higher payouts for the affiliates. That's why they often limit the cookies' lifespan.

AM Navigator suggests that for a vendor it doesn't really matter whether the cookie expiration date is set to 30, 45, or 120 days. But, it does matter to affiliate marketers. Therefore, it makes sense to opt for a longer cookie expiration date to encourage cooperation and to secure the mutual interest. The longer an affiliate cookie life becomes, the more partner-friendly the affiliate program becomes. Since the shortest acceptable cookie duration is 30 days, I recommend you look for affiliate programs that offer a longer cookie life.

SIDENOTE:

At LiveChat Partner Program, we understand the importance of adjusting terms and conditions to meet the affiliate partner's needs. Thus, we extended the cookie duration to 120 days. And we think it's a fair expiration date. I'd love to see it in each affiliate partner program.



Brand Recognition

This aspect is crucial, especially for an a newbie that wants to have a smooth start. Brand recognition determines how easy it's to sell a product. It's easier to become a successful affiliate if you represent well-established and highly trusted brands and products.

So how to gauge brand recognition when you are new to a specific niche? It depends on the business model as metrics can vary significantly between B2C and B2B companies. Before you join any affiliate program, do your best to investigate who your seller is and what's their reputation.

Customers and Revenue Scale

First, check out how many customers the company of interest has and how many countries they operate in. Then,

confront these numbers with the market standards and see how much a particular merchant relates to the average. This will separate the wheat from the chaff.

Social Presence

Also, take a look at the vendor's social media profiles and study their social presence in niche-relevant communities. Find out how strong social following the merchant has amassed and how active these followers are.

Testimonials

Pay attention to testimonials and reviews – does this product and a brand generate any strong sentiment? The more testimonials, favorable mentions, and sentiments appear in the community, the better. Testimonials and positive reviews are indicative of the product's quality and reputation. This is what you – as an affiliate marketer – should be looking for when evaluating every affiliate program.

Approach to Transparency

Choosing the perfect affiliate program, pay attention to the vendor's transparency regarding the terms and conditions. This includes crucial information – how revenue is calculated. From a business perspective, transparency can boost

conversion rates of any affiliate program and build trust between the merchant and affiliate.

The rule of thumb is: never join an affiliate programs that seem unfinished or underdeveloped. What do you risk? Your revenue is a significant concern then. Faulty agreements can work to your disadvantage. Worst case scenario – you might get tricked.

Unfortunately, transparency is not always well-understood. There are a few best practices the vendor can put in place to enhance transparency of the in-house affiliate program.

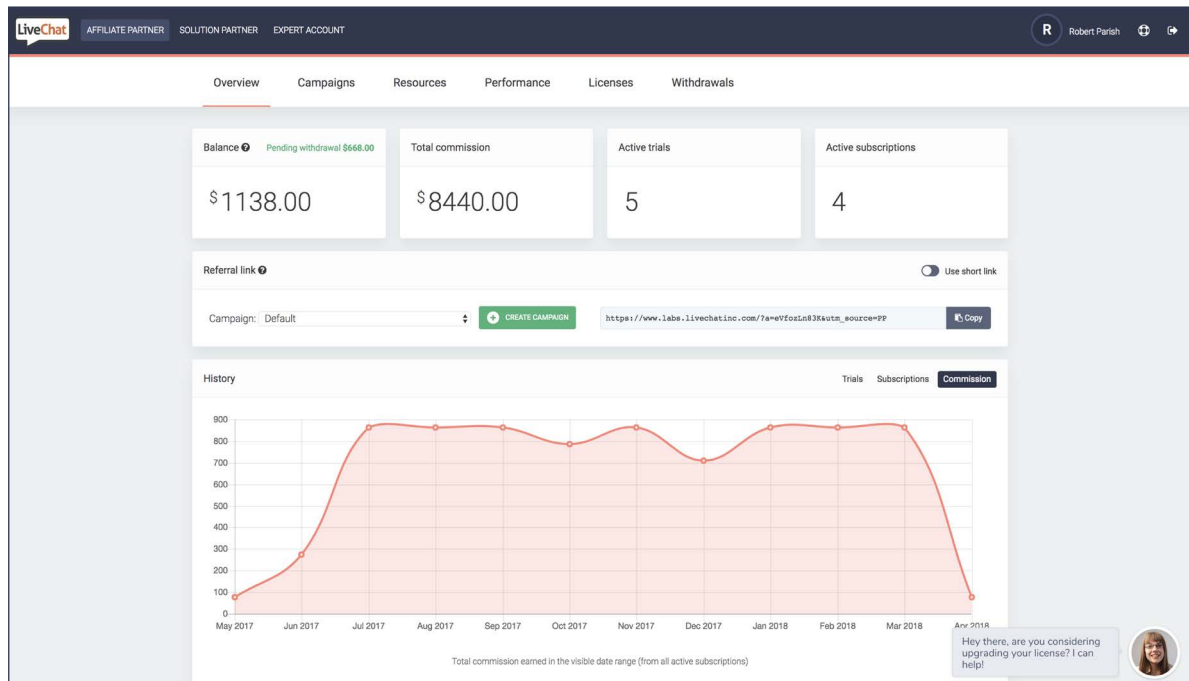
Transparent Affiliate Policy

Merchant's job is to create a clear affiliate program policy; so you can easily find out what the requirements and expectations are. Such cooperation guidelines should be put in simple words so that both parties are on the same page. An affiliate policy should also include how-tos, screenshots, and be full of examples.

Relevant Dashboard with Reports

A panel that features extensive reports based on *Google's* UTM campaigns lets you track your performance. This way you can always know what the status of your account is. While advanced affiliates might track the data on their end, it's

still a great way for a merchant to be transparent and give an access to all partners.



Source: LiveChat Partner Program, an example of affiliate dashboard.

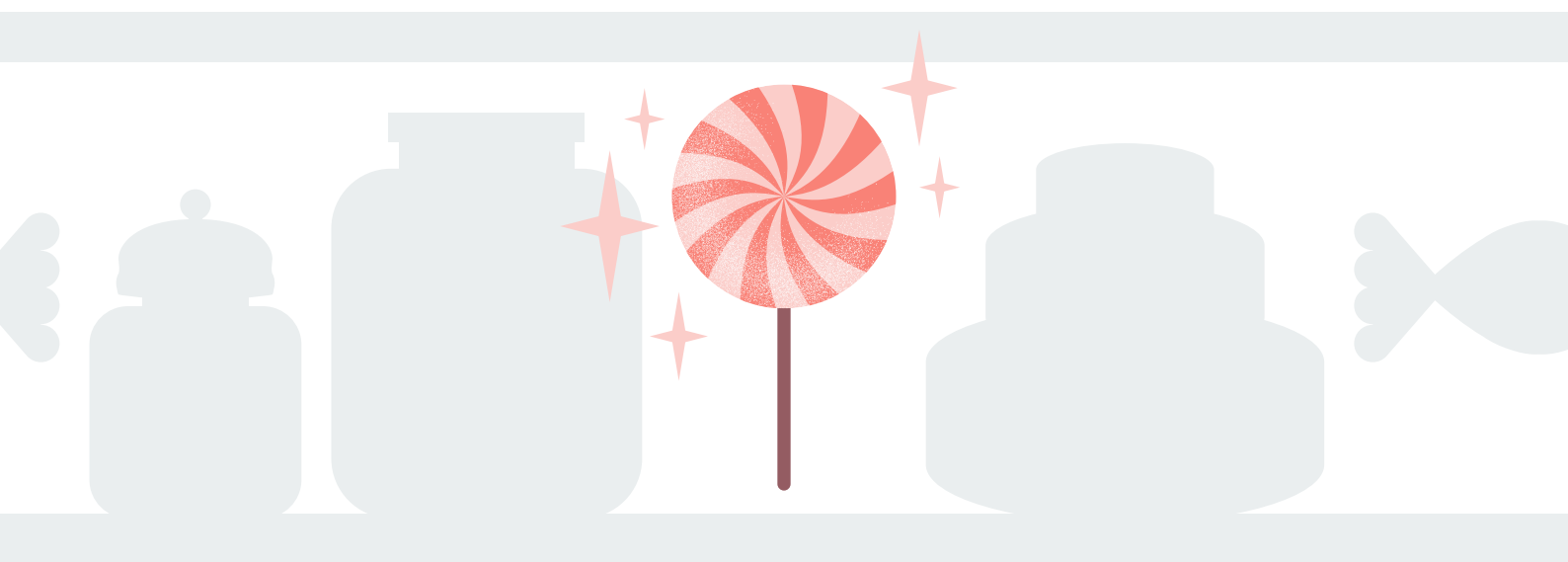
A dashboard will keep you informed about your earnings in real-time. It will show you:

- how your commission rates are progressing over time
- how many times your affiliate links are clicked
- how many paying customers you've referred

In fact, charts and figures strengthen your motivation and challenge you to improve.

Top-Notch Marketing Materials

We are all visual creatures. We buy with our eyes.



This makes imperative to use high-quality and flawless marketing resources in your affiliate campaigns. Top-notch marketing materials constitute another crucial element of a perfect affiliate program.

The responsibility to create a repository of marketing materials rests on a vendor. They should provide you with all the tools and visual aids to help you hit the ground running. A good affiliate program provider streamlines partner onboarding process and makes work easier on the affiliate's end.

What Are the Must Have Marketing Resources

While the affiliate's input is essential and there's usually a lot of work involved in creating and promoting powerful campaigns, vendors should meet their partner's halfway and provide excellent marketing framework.

Must have marketing resources include:

- **Content** – product descriptions and CTA copy
- **Guidelines** – how affiliates can operate, promote products, and advertise a brand (this includes using logos, fonts, widgets, and brand colors)
- **Creatives** – visual materials such as banners, email templates, screenshots, widgets, and more resources, approved for affiliate use
- **Affiliate Program Updates** – affiliates should always be up-to-date about any changes made to the partner panel, the affiliate program itself as well as current promotions or contests
- **Automation Tools** – such as API or data feed to ensure affiliates are advertising the latest products and offers on their website

No matter if you leverage widgets, logos, banners, screenshots or copy in your affiliate marketing activity, they should all be of excellent quality and wide variety in each and every affiliate program.

Dedicated Affiliate Manager

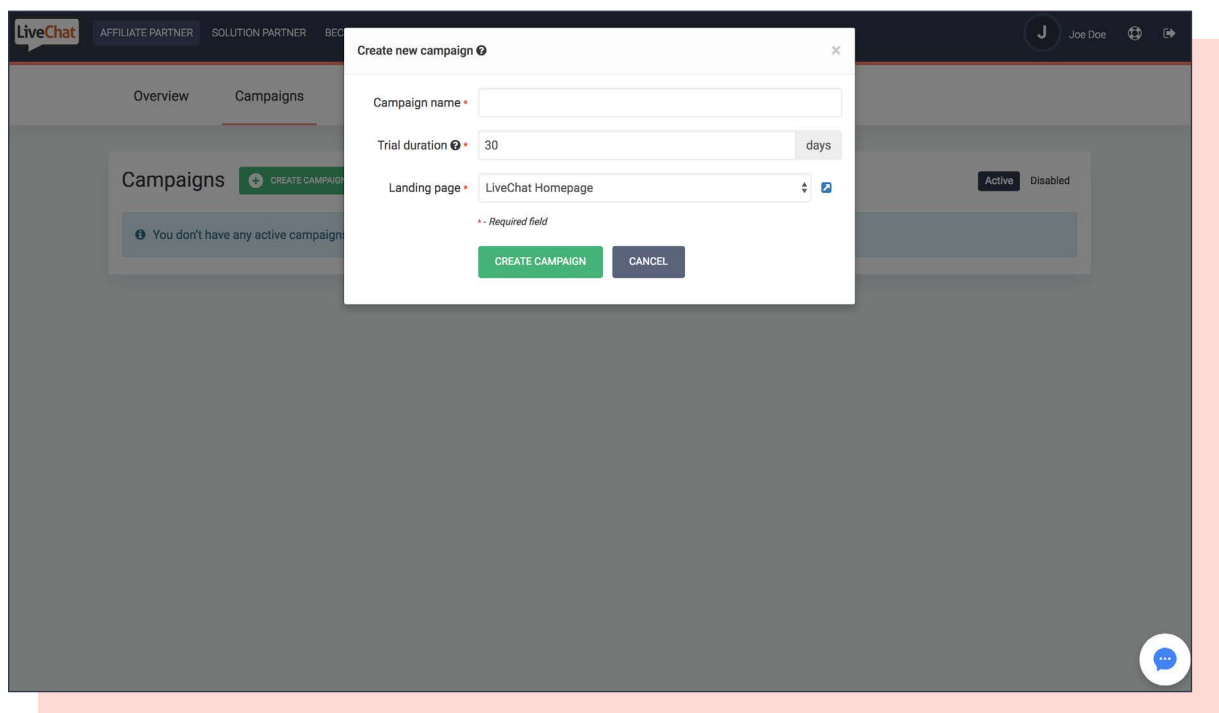
A dedicated affiliate manager is absolutely indispensable to any project of this kind. An affiliate manager is responsible for managing and supervising an affiliate program and operates in following areas:

- Setting up the in-house affiliate program,
- Recruiting and approving affiliate partners,
- Helping affiliates get pro-active,
- Processing commissions,
- Communicating with affiliates on a daily basis,
- Resolving issues related to affiliate programs,
- Dealing with any other operational and marketing aspects related to the project.

When looking for the best affiliate programs to work with, you should always have a contact person who would help you with all your issues. Without a dedicated affiliate manager, an affiliate partner program cannot be successful.

Campaign Builder

Campaign builder makes it easy to create and manage links with unique parameters in one place. Such tool automates the process of generating affiliate links and makes it much more convenient directly in a partner panel.



Source: [LiveChat Partner Program](#), an example of campaign builder.

Though rarely seen elsewhere, we have included a campaign builder in the *LiveChat Partner Program*. It makes setting

your campaigns much easier. This is one of the strongest benefits that make our affiliate program stand out.

Sign up for free and see **how the campaign builder works**

Join now →

DIG DEEPER:

[Campaign Builder and new Features in LiveChat Affiliate Program](#) [Step by Step Guide](#)

Educational Aspects

More and more companies offer in-house affiliate partner programs. However, only a few provide training material about it. Affiliate partners need guidelines on how to

promote a specific product and brand, so it's best practice to share know-how with them or even provide certification in the specific industry.

This makes partner education a unique and valuable argument in favor of signing up for the affiliate program in question.

Let's have a quick look at the factors discussed in this paragraph again:

- fixed, recurring commission
- long cookie life
- high brand recognition
- approach to transparency
- top-notch marketing materials
- dedicated marketing manager
- campaign builder
- educational aspects

All of them form the essential foundation of any solid affiliate program. Make sure that the affiliate program you are about to join meets these standard market expectations.

You can also check these additional tips from Bill Burniece of HighPayingAffiliatePrograms.com:

“



Bill Burniece
CEO of *High Paying*
Affiliate Programs

When seeking an affiliate program to join, here are a few tips to finding a good one that will have your best interest in mind:

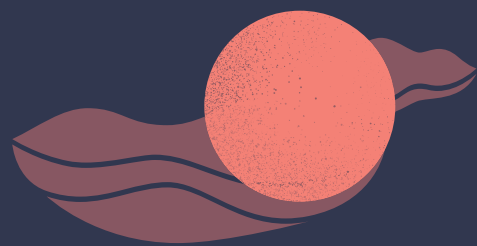
- First and most importantly, never pay any money up front to join an affiliate program. I have reviewed literally thousands of programs and have yet to find one that is worth paying money into to get started. Not one.
- Next, look for reviews and feedback about the program online. Check the search engines, affiliate directories and forums to see what other people are saying about them. Is the feedback generally good or bad? Is anyone accusing them of scamming affiliates or any other shenanigans?
- Look for a well-organized affiliate program page that clearly lays out the terms of the

program, percentages and payouts. If you have to contact them to get this information that is definitely a red flag.

- See if you can easily find contact information for their affiliate manager and send them a message with a few simple questions. If they take more than a few days to respond or don't respond at all that's unfortunately what you should expect if you promote them and have any problems. Worse yet is if you cannot locate any contact information at all.
- After you sign up expect to see a well-organized affiliate dashboard that will show you your clicks, sales and payouts at a glance and customizable by date range. If the dashboard is a mess, chances are their affiliate program is too.
- Finally, any promise online to make money 'fast or easy' is a major red flag. Just like anything else worthwhile, it takes time and patience to learn what works and what doesn't in digital marketing. Instead of trying to get rich quick, make it your goal to achieve

steady progress each and every day, follow both the program rules (and the law) and ensure your longevity in this lucrative business.

Summary



Affiliate marketing is a viable business model and continuously evolving. The performance relies on your determination, approach and the affiliate strategy you choose to follow. The whole game is about earning a commission. In this guide, we gave you heads up on:

- affiliate marketing essentials
- how you can to start this game
- what are your risks and opportunities

Affiliate marketing is without a doubt a complicated task, but with a systematic approach and a mighty toolset, your efforts can be streamlined and taken to the next level. Now, it's your turn to take this theory and turn it into practice.

Our fingers are crossed.

Good luck and happy affiliate marketing!

We love your feedback!

Was this guide helpful? Is there something else about affiliate marketing business that you are interested in? Drop us a line at partners@livechatinc.com and our next post will be about it!

Meet the Team



AUTHOR

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Kasia is a content marketer at *LiveChat* with the 4 years of experience in the SaaS universe. When she's not writing, then you can find her traveling, watching *Netflix*, shopping and spending time with her dog, Vincent. She has an undying love for vegetarian food, yoga and meditation.

Get in touch with her at [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).



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Malgorzata Buksinska

This ebook is designed by Gosia. She makes it her mission to ease visual communication. Aside from that, she is also obsessed with typography and letters in general. On a personal note she is a cat lover and avid reader.

You can check her [portfolio](#) and her [LinkedIn](#) profile too.



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She's a marketer with a passion for 'doing things that don't scale' and a life-long learner. If she's not at her desk writing or researching new blog topics, she's probably either running or listening to podcasts (or doing both of these things at once). Connect with her via email or on Twitter.



WEB DEVELOPER

Lukasz Labedzki

Lukasz is a versatile developer who can cope with anything you throw at him. From backend architecture through metrics and integrations to email templates, there's nothing he hasn't tried his hand at. In his free time he enjoys mountain climbing and studying. A mad scientist at heart, Lukasz is passionate about quantum physics, astrophysics and space exploration. Chat with him on Twitter or LinkedIn.

